

PROPOSALS

FOR PUBLISHING BY

SUBSCRIPTION,

DEDICATED, WITH PERMISSION,

TO THE MOST NOBLE THE

MARQUIS OF SALISBURY,

A COMPLETE HISTORY

OF THE

ENGLISH STAGE.

INTERSPERSED with a comparative and comprehensive review of the ASIATIC, the GRECIAN, the ROMAN, the SPANISH, the ITALIAN, the PORTUGUESE, the GERMAN, the FRENCH, and OTHER THEATRES from their ORIGIN to the PRESENT TIME; and involving BIOGRAPHICAL TRACTS and ANECDOTES, instructive and amusing, concerning a prodigious number of AUTHORS, COMPOSERS, PAINTERS, ACTORS, SINGERS, and PATRONS of DRAMATIC PRODUCTIONS IN ALL COUNTRIES; with an intention to place the STAGE IN GENERAL, and the ENGLISH STAGE IN PARTICULAR, in an eligible point of view, as an object of national consequence, by considering it as a criterion of taste and a regulator of human manners.

The whole written, with the assistance of interesting documents, collected in the course of Five and Thirty Years, by

MR. DIBDIN.

THIS work will be published on a fine wove paper, and with a beautiful new type by FRY, in THIRTY-FIVE Numbers, at ONE SHILLING each number, making, with the dedication and preface, which will be given as an addition to the last number, FIVE HANDSOME VOLUMES IN OCTAVO.

TO be continued MONTHLY, from the FIRST of MAY, 1797, on which Day the FIRST NUMBER will be published.

NEVER was there less difficulty in describing the necessity, the advantage, and the utility of a work than of this. To fascinate the mind into the exercise of morality, to ridicule folly into a love of social duty, to inculcate virtue through the medium of pleasure, and to beget an abhorrence of vice by rendering it hideous, was originally intended by the institution, and has, to the infinite benefit of the mind, the gratification of the senses, and the improvement of the understanding, continued to be, but with little abatement, the province and operation of the stage.

WITH the pulpit, and the bar, the stage has ever been properly classed; and it will readily be granted that if the regulation and care of our religious principles, and the protection and security of our worldly property, are objects of national importance, the polish and refinement of our social manners cannot make up an inconsiderable part of our character as rational beings; since, without the inoffensive pleasures of life, the more serious considerations of spiritual and temporal concerns could no more render the enjoyments of the mind complete, than, without health, could the comforts of piety, and the advantages of fortune, those of the body.

THIS publication, if it should be executed with full effect, will certainly operate to a most eligible extent. To those who chuse to consider it superficially, it will yet be an important object, for, perhaps, more novelty and information will grow out of it than is contained in any work extant. As the anecdotes and the observations relate to all countries, and the Stage, in consequence of conveying instruction through its influence on the senses, has at all times boasted admirers, from its highest patrons down to the lowest orders of society; it cannot fail of being interesting to every sort of reader; to facilitate which, care will be taken to keep the style of the narrative nervous, perspicuous, and simple. To those who have been desirous, but not accustomed to read history, much information will be gathered from those circumstances in which some particular periods of the Stage will naturally lead to an elucidation of national events.

AGAIN. The History of the Theatre necessarily connects itself with the History of the Opera. Music, therefore, as far as it relates to nature, and its effects on the passions, and which has been best felt through the medium of the Drama, will at different opportunities be treated on at considerable length; which will, of course, branch out the subject into Dance, Pantomime, and all those extraneous objects which, according as their modes of introduction have varied, have sometimes corrupted, and sometimes ornamented the Theatre; nor will Painting escape observation, that so the History of the Stage, as far as it goes, may comprehend a History of the Arts.

IN short, there cannot be a subject so full of interest, amusement, and instruction as the Stage. There is no object it does not embrace, no curiosity it does not excite, no mental pleasure it does not convey, no manners it does not represent. An attempt, therefore, to review this extensive theme, and by comparison to place the English Stage in a light superior to any other, is submitted to the English reader in a more digested form than has hitherto been attempted, and as a classical work, in which the taste, the judgment, and the manners of the country are materially interested.

SUBSCRIBERS' Names are received at Mr. DIBDIN's WAREHOUSEs, LEICESTER PLACE, LEICESTER SQUARE, and in the STRAND; at both which Places may be had his popular Novel of HANNAH HEWIT; Or, the FEMALE CRUSOE; The YOUNGER BROTHER; his various SONGS; and every other Article specified in his Catalogue.

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